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From A University Press-Keeping Presses Healthy

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From A University Press — Keeping Presses Healthy

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November 11-17, 2012 will be the inaugural University Press Week, as sponsored by the **Association of American University Presses (AAUP)**. This week will also serve as a culminating event in the celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the **AAUP**, the professional association to which nearly all peer-reviewing university presses in this country belong.

This anniversary moment is perhaps a good time to look at where university presses have collectively come and where they are headed in the next 75 years. **AAUP** board president **Peter Dougherty (Princeton University Press)** notes, “While our 75th anniversary gives us the opportunity to reflect on our celebrated past, it also provides us a setting to frame the ways in which we will move forward as an innovative publishing force intent on reaching more readers in more corners of the world than ever before.” At first it appeared that the **AAUP** would have to celebrate this anniversary without one of its member presses, the **University of Missouri Press**, whose operations were abruptly shuttered in May 2012. After a week of stunned silence, a community of individuals, faculty, authors, and other publishers rallied in protest, asking the university administration to reconsider. The discussion and announcements in the weeks that followed may someday come to be used as part of a textbook study in how not to handle a sensitive campus issue. In late August, however, the Missouri administration announced that the press would be revived under a more traditional model, though the details are still being discussed by a newly-appointed advisory board.

The many twists and turns of the Missouri situation have been well documented. What I’d like to do instead, and what I hope will be more useful, is to posit some ideas about how the press at Missouri found itself in such a challenging position, how that press may not be alone in its plight, and how presses and their leaders can prevent this story from repeating itself.

“You don’t know what you’ve got till it’s gone.” Or, perhaps more accurately, the press itself and perhaps the campus library and the author a press just published know what they’ve got, but if they’re the only ones who know, that’s a potentially dangerous situation. As the Facebook campaign to save the **Missouri Press** demonstrated, the Press did indeed have followers and fans. Additionally, the influential series editors and authors who wrote to the university president, asking for a reversal of the decision even as they pulled their intellectual properties away from the press, knew what they were losing. These supporters rallied and were mobilized, but the fact is they should have been mobilized long before a closure announcement. University presses cannot afford to believe they are immune from scrutiny or cuts in funding just because they always have

been. Press supporters and staff need to be in front of faculty, administrators, and other key constituents frequently. This is no longer a minor PR activity that can be put off until there is time; there never is time unless you make it. Additionally, this type of education and outreach is not a once and done activity; it must be done in an ongoing manner, as the campus cast of characters — not to mention new technologies — changes and evolves.

University presses are valuable and generate value for a campus and its faculty and students. Presses, however, should no longer assume that everyone automatically knows this. Money is not easy to come by on campuses these days, and presses and their advocates need to be shouting from the rooftops whenever and wherever they can what it is that scholarly publishers do and why their operations are integral to a campus’s mission. Though to us publishers our organization and practices make sense, I’ve discovered that many people outside our specialized world see publishing as an elite, aging, and out-of-date business shrouded in mysterious traditions. In an age where administrators are forced to make increasingly difficult decisions about what gets funded and what doesn’t, being misunderstood — and especially being seen as behind the times and resistant to change — is hazardous.

This hesitancy to tout our own accomplishments and worth likely has many origins, among them: we truly believe that our work speaks for itself; that bragging is unseemly; and (perhaps most unfortunately) that we know what we’re doing and we don’t need administrators’ unhelpful meddling. I do wonder, however, if there isn’t another important reason some university press administrators want to hide when they should be out hosting an educational seminar for faculty: publishing and scholarly communication are changing so rapidly that we *don’t* know what we’re doing 100% of the time. We’re forced to experiment with different business models, content delivery formats, and marketing tactics. What’s more disconcerting, some of these experiments may not work, and who wants to admit that to a provost or library dean? But as **Kathryn Schultz** argues in her fascinating book *Being Wrong*, using error and the knowledge it brings to make better subsequent decisions makes us smarter and stronger — both as individuals and organizations. Situations and patterns of student and faculty behavior change all the time. Given this environment, not experimenting won’t prevent you from being wrong. More likely, you’ll end up being wrong/inefficient/risking irrelevancy if you stand in the same place while your authors and customers have already walked two blocks ahead of you.

Perhaps it is truly to our advantage as university press leaders to freely admit that our old world has shattered, and also confess that we are not completely certain what scholarly communi-

cation will look like in five or ten years, much less 75. **Ellen**

Faran, director of the **MIT Press**, notes: “We can gauge the impact of some of the transitions underway around us but can only guess at the size and shape of others.” Rather than understanding this as a weakness, however, **Faran** instead argues that change actually facilitates the continued relevance of university presses: “A fluid environment is a great place for presses whose missions and values are aligned with those of scholars and academic institutions. A fluid environment increases the importance of publishing distinctive work. The rapid changes swirling around us may seem disconcerting at first, but our responsibility today is to thrive amidst fluidity.”

This is no easy task, certainly. But is there really a choice? On a recent conference call with a consultant, a librarian, and a campus IT manager, the consultant made the following two statements in rapid succession: “You [university presses] are overadapted to a vanishing ecological niche” and “You are attached to an unworkable business model.” After a long moment of silence, the librarian and I began to laugh and said, “Yeah, you’re probably right....” While the consultant’s assessment and predictions were fairly dire and I would argue (or at least hope) that he had overstated the case a bit, what he wanted to emphasize was that publishers, libraries, and scholarly societies cannot go it alone; we have to work together to solve our collective problems. We in scholarly communications, broadly defined, find ourselves in a place — the campus, the world of ideas — where our output and activities have irrevocably knit us together, and the task now is to acknowledge that the work of our separate groups must now join in support of these common goals.

“As the traditional boundaries of our world dissolve, so our connections strengthen,” **Faran** says. So in the next 75 years of our collective work, we as university presses should operate from the perspective that the processes of outward communication and learning from our constituents must drive our internal vision for our work as scholarly publishers. Not that we should be dictated to, for we have a valuable role and perspective of our own within this ecosystem, but we also cannot exist independently of the world we work to serve. We are not the aging, lumbering dinosaurs of scholarly communication that the media, especially as it covered the Missouri situation, frequently paints presses to be.

But neither are we immune from the natural evolution of our world. Electronic content in all its varied forms — databases, monograph aggregations, books by the chapter purchased or loaned — is here to stay and must be made available alongside print books. We must stop

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the aftermath of the spring 2012 closure or reformulation (since reversed) of the **University of Missouri Press**. Protests came not just from scholars and press authors all over the country, but also from Missouri readers, writers, faculty, alumni, and leaders. It became exceptionally clear that a Press is an integral part of a university's community and, more, can help to open up that community in irreplaceable ways.

University Press Week will carry the lesson of Missouri into all of our communities. The focus of the 2012 celebration is presses' role in "contributing to an informed society." For that is the true work an AAUP member press undertakes for all its constituents, local, national, and international — the books, journals, reference works, apps, and scholarly networks of these publishers offer reliable information, knowledge, and lasting availability through a variety of formats. AAUP's "Books for Understanding" program, listing the highest-quality books across a spectrum of contemporary issues, demonstrates what the American university press means for an educated citizenry, and the University Press Week Fine Print* (*not just print!) online gallery highlights what it has meant for disciplines and communities for more than a century.

Creating an informed society is certainly impossible without the work of librarians, and so our talks with each other continue and intensify. Libraries and university presses are the most natural of partners, and so we are especially pleased to invite our colleagues and friends at Charleston and throughout the library world to celebrate University Press Week and, as you'll read elsewhere in this issue, to help us look forward to the next 75 years of collaboration in service to the advancement of knowledge. www.universitypressweek.org 🍷

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fearing being wrong at the cost of the valuable knowledge we gain from experimenting with what books we choose to publish and how we publish them. University presses can and should be a lynchpin in the new system of scholarly communication. It is up to us, however, to understand what it is that we do that works and how we add value, and conversely, which of our activities need to be reimagined for a digital age. This can best be done through considered experimentation, whether with electronic workflows that make our content more flexible (in both its putting together and taking apart) or with enhanced eBooks that enrich both the user's knowledge and experience. So here's to the next 75 years, AAUP. May they unfold in an environment of reimagining, experimentation, and purposeful collaboration that will make university presses matter, keep us relevant, and make us thrive. 🍷

Biz of Acq — eBook PDA at Eastern Michigan University



by **Joe Badics** (Acquisitions Librarian, Bruce T. Halle Library, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI 48197; Phone: 734-487-0020 x.2053) [<jbadics@emich.edu>](mailto:jbadics@emich.edu)

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One of the hot topics at recent conferences, including the **2010 Charleston Conference**, has been Patron-Driven Acquisitions, or "PDA." It was the topic of two publications in 2011: *Patron-Driven Acquisitions: History and Best Practices*, edited by **David A. Swords**, and *Patron-Driven Acquisitions: Current Successes and Future Directions*, edited by **Judith M. Nixon**, **Robert S. Freeman**, and **Suzanne M. Ward**.

As the **Nixon** set points out, "PDA" has already been occurring. Virtually all libraries have used patron input to build their collections; and many libraries, including ours, have been purchasing interlibrary loan requests rather than borrowing when appropriate to the collection. In our case we have been purchasing paper copies and rush order and process them. **NetLibrary** offered the "PDA" of eBooks many years ago.

Why the sudden attention to patron-driven acquisitions (again)? Tighter (if not decreasing) acquisition budgets, the cost of storing volumes, declining print circulation, pressure to repurpose library space, and continuous expansion and embracing of electronic resources by the public are just some of the reasons libraries are migrating to eBooks. The pendulum has been swinging away from just-in-case collection development to favor just-in-time purchasing.

eBooks are not new to our library. We have participated in Michigan state-wide purchases of **NetLibrary** eBook packages and purchased selected Springer eBook backfiles. Our computer science selector has been managing a small subset of computer books in "Safari." Our Department of Information Technology has graciously been paying for campus access to "Books 24x7," for which we have added a record and link for each title in our catalog. With the exception of "Safari," our purchases have been for sets of books.

In 2011 we expanded our selection options in **YBP's** Gobi book ordering system to allow our selectors to purchase individual electronic books instead of paper format when we signed an agreement with **ebrary**. Since we already had a contract with **NetLibrary** for earlier purchases, selectors could also opt for **NetLibrary** eBooks when available (now called **EBSCOhost**). Several selectors immediately embraced electronic over print in the expected subjects of business, science, and computer science. Our business collection has especially migrated to electronic as our College of Business is located downtown and not on the main campus where the library is. The rest of selectors have chosen electronic over print in their areas sporadically to never.

After hearing and reading about the various "PDA" eBook selection programs, we decided to launch a pilot project by expanding our existing pacts with **YBP** and **ebrary**. **ebrary's** short-term loan (STL) system allows our patron to use the eBook for free until a charge is triggered by 1) using the resource for more than ten minutes, 2) viewing ten or more pages (not counting table-of-contents or indices), or 3) copying pages. Once triggered, a STL generally costs 10-15% of the eBook price and allows unfettered access to the book for 24 hours without generating another STL. We decided to pay for three STLs with the fourth event generating a purchase.

Our current approval/slip plan with **YBP** was reviewed. The profile was retained with some exceptions: for instance we excluded publishers that do not allow any short-term loans (one event automatically triggers a purchase). We also excluded textbooks, cookbooks, conference proceedings, dictionaries, and books classified by **YBP** at a professional level. We also capped the price for an eBook at \$200.

We decided to add records for all **ebrary** eBooks that matched our profile from 2010 to date (2009 and older was deemed already out of date for many subjects). The ISBNs from our current catalog were matched against the **ebrary** database. Only eBooks that we did not already own in print or electronic were added to our catalog.

The initial **ebrary** "PDA" catalog records were reviewed by our cataloging librarian. Our systems librarian arranged for the backfile of 2010 to-date eBook records to be added to the catalog as well as for weekly download of new "PDA" records. It was decided to add the phrase, "DDA Title," in a 590 note: the librarians and staff can identify the **ebrary** titles from other eBooks in our catalog. (**YBP** calls their system "demand-drive acquisitions" hence the "DDA").

We created a deposit account with **YBP** to pay for the orders for the pilot instead of penalizing any subject fund; thus, assuring those selectors who have refused to select any eBooks in their subjects.

Due to extenuating circumstances (ahem: a flood), we finally got the "PDA" new and backfiles of older records started in the beginning of May 2012. We did a silent rollout: we did not announce to the public that there were approximately 10,000 new eBooks available.

During the first three months (May-July 2012) 77 books generated STLs and five received enough STLs to be ultimately purchased. Of the

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